



BCR...Connecting Creek and Community

May 13, 2013

Ballona Wetlands Restoration Project
c/o Donna McCormick
1 Ada, Suite 100
Irvine, CA 92816
Via email: DONNA.MCCORMICK@icfi.com

Subject: Proposed Annenberg Interpretive Center in
Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve

Dear Ms McCormick,

As you know, Ballona Creek Renaissance (BCR) requested a 60-day extension of the public comment time for the Ballona Wetlands Restoration Revised Notice of Preparation that would include a well-noticed public meeting. Unfortunately we neither received notice of the 15-day extension that was granted nor of any public meeting.

After continued review and discussion, BCR's Board of Directors has decided to go on record in respectful opposition to the proposed interpretive center for the following primary reasons:

1. Ballona Wetlands interpretation and education should rely on self-guided or docent-led walking tours on accessible trails and overlooks rather than on displays and programs housed in buildings, with small trailhead interpretive and support facilities being a possible exception.
2. However well-designed the building may be, it appears to be much too large, even if it were located off-site.
3. The inclusion of a pet adoption and care facility is an inappropriate, incompatible, and unacceptable use of the ecological reserve.
4. In fact, any building project would be an intrusion into this uniquely situated open space ecosystem.
5. All parts of the wetlands reserve, even the southeastern boundary of Area C, have ecological value and potential for renewal.
6. All existing and potential visitor points of entry and features require thoughtful and coordinated planning to provide maximum ecological benefit while also providing compatible educational benefit.
 - a. Discovery Park on Bluff Creek Drive in adjoining Playa Vista already provides outdoor interpretation and education for visitors and could serve as a greater wetlands trailhead via the Freshwater Marsh and Cabora Road and/or Lincoln and Jefferson Boulevards.

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- b. The existing Area B salt marsh and dunes visitors entrance behind Gordon's Market and the Area A entrance from Fiji Way could be enhanced as other educational but controlled points of entry for visitors.
- c. For Area C, various alternate perimeter locations for trailheads or overlooks should be considered in addition to the one proposed.

While starting with a Ballona Creek focus, BCR has actively participated in wetlands education, restoration, and planning over the years, often in collaboration with others. So we offer our comments from a standpoint of first-hand knowledge of the players, problems, pluses, and potential of this critically important ecosystem. Although we have just shared concerns, we also have great hope.

We greatly appreciate all the positive things that the three restoration agencies and the Annenberg Foundation have done both in our watershed and throughout the state. Although there may be some positive benefits associated with the proposed center, we believe that they do not justify its inclusion in the restoration plan.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments, late as they may be. We welcome the opportunity for further dialog as the restoration planning process continues to unfold. We also request emailed communication to jim.lamm@ballonacreek.org in addition to any mailed communication to help ensure timely receipt.

Best regards,



Jim Lamm, President

Copies via email:

Rick Mayfield, California Department of Fish & Wildlife, Rick.Mayfield@wildlife.ca.gov
Mary Small, State Coastal Conservancy, msmall@scc.ca.gov
Shelley Luce, Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation, sluce@santamonicabay.org
Leonard Aube, The Annenberg Foundation, LAube@annenbergfoundation.org

Ballona Creek Renaissance (BCR)...Connecting Creek and Community
A Culver City-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Federal Tax ID No. 95-4764614
P.O. Box 843, Culver City CA 90232...310-839-6896...www.ballonacreek.org